

wary McLean neighbors

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McLEAN — It's customary, when a landowner wants to do something his neighbors dislike, to invite the neighbors in. That happened this time.

The guests were the residents of McLean, an affluent, prestigious neighborhood between the Potomac River and the Capitol Beltway. But, this time, the hosts were the people of the CIA, which is the supersecret, fenced-in center of U.S. spying operations and also a McLean resident.

The CIA's neighbors have been spooked by plans to build a 1.1 million square-foot administration building and a parking deck behind the existing CIA building on its sprawling, wooded grounds.

So the CIA threw open the gates, for the first time since it moved into the compound in September 1961. But the open gate was only for the people who could get one of the blue, 3-by-5-inch tickets the CIA printed for the occasion.

The ticket said to drive to the McLean gate, off state Route 123. There, a guard wanted to see the ticket and then gave explicit directions to the administration building. Along the road to the headquarters were several places where one could turn off, except that each turn was blocked by an old Plymouth with its flashers on.

Each car was attended by a crisp-looking man in a cheap-looking suit, standing at parade rest. Between the lookouts, birds swooped idly between towering trees.

The site of the meeting was a self-contained, bubble-shaped auditorium adjacent to the headquarters building.

Harry Fitzwater, deputy director for administration, greeted people. "So glad to have you. I'm sure our security people will recover — sometime."

To each of the 250 neighbors who showed up, the CIA's public relations people handed a 30-page book with a glossy, red cover.

The book said "intelligence" had been around since God told Moses "spy out the land of Canaan," and gave a synopsis of the history of the U.S. intelligence operation, complete with a chart of the country's 11 intelligence organizations. It had pictures of the art exhibited in the headquarters halls, which no one in the auditorium could enter.

Fitzwater stepped to the podium. "I'm glad you all could come. We should get started. We have to give up the auditorium in two hours so they can show a James Bond training film."

"Seriously, our agency has had serious space problems since it was formed in 1947. There are two reasons for the problems now. When the first director, Allen Dulles, was planning this building in the mid-'50s, he promised Congress to do it for \$55 million. Ten million of that went to extend the George Washington Parkway, which was part of the agreement."

"With the arrival of computers and word processors, [space problems have] grown more acute. In the last 10 years, we've moved 1,000 people out to make room for machines. We have people in rented space in Arlington, Rosslyn, Tyson's Corner — all over."

"Our work is multidisciplinary. The economist must talk to the cartographer and the political scientist. And you can't do that over the phone or running up and down the highway. It's expensive. It may sound to you like agency problems, but it's costing you \$20 million a year."

So, the CIA proposed expanding. Larry Myers, the CIA's chief planner, followed Fitzwater. "We're trying to handle traffic and put in buffers to keep you from having to look at us and to keep us from looking at you."

He reviewed the plans, showing slides of models. While the plans for the building had changed only slightly, so much controversy had erupted over the traffic plan that it has been thrown out, Myers said. People clapped and cheered.

Virginia's highway planners will hire a consultant to take new traffic counts, Myers said, and they will develop a new traffic plan. People cheered again.

Then Myers tried to explain how 3,000 people would park in 1,000 new spaces: "We took the number of people here now, which we can't tell you because that's classified, but we took the number and added 3,000 and added the 1,000 parking spaces and figured the parking ratio. Well, without giving you the numbers, because then you could compute the number of people here, we looked at that number and compared it to the ratio we had back in 1970, before we started moving people out, and it's about the same."

A woman suggested calling the Soviet Embassy to find out how many people work at the CIA.

Myers promised that "we should not be bringing in any major employee population after this expansion."

He also promised that the CIA would stagger hours for its employees to ease rush-hour traffic jams. That and the new road plan "will allow all of us to end up halfway to where we wanted to be," he said.

But the planners had decided they were right to put the main entrance at the McLean gate, he said. They had trimmed the size of the reception center to only 2,500 square feet, though.

"We aren't going to be running tour buses through here," he said.

"Now, the excavation," Myers said. "Fairfax County came in and wanted to know where we were going to dump the 355,000 cubic yards of dirt we had to excavate, and over what roads we were going to haul it. The first thing we did was change our plans. Now, we only have to excavate 250,000 cubic yards."

Plus, they decided not to haul the dirt away but to make berms around the compound's western perimeter, Myers said.

As the presentation ended, a half-dozen people left, but the others barely moved. Speakers rose. No one protested the building, but no one thought it could be built without incapacitating McLean's streets.

John Adams, a lawyer who lives off nearby Georgetown Pike, argued that the government was ignoring local road problems and the visitor center should be off the federal parkway.

Myers responded that the budget included \$3 million for the Virginia highway department's use in rebuilding state roads. "The [National] Park Service doesn't want our commercial traffic on its parkway," he said.

John Byrne, a park service official, agreed. While the parkway running by the compound could absorb some new CIA traffic, "I'm not going to let everyone use that parkway willy-nilly," he said.

People booed and hissed.

Other residents seconded Adams' complaints. Myers countered that "until we came out and said we were going to expand, no one thought traffic was a problem."

Boos filled the room. From his seat, Adams yelled, "Everyone who thinks it's a problem, clap." The room erupted.